

Khmer language

Khmer (/kə ˈmɛər/^[5] or /kmɛər/^[6] natively ភាសាខ្មែរ *phiāsaa khmae* Khmer pronunciation: [pʰiə.ˈsaː kʰmae], dialectal *khmæ* or *khmɛɛr*, or more formally ខេមរភាសា *kheema ˈra ˈphiāsaa* Khmer pronunciation: [kʰeː.maʔ.raʔ pʰiə.ˈsaː]) is the language of the Khmer people and the official language of Cambodia. With approximately 16 million speakers, it is the second most widely spoken Austroasiatic language (after Vietnamese). Khmer has been influenced considerably by Sanskrit and Pali, especially in the royal and religious registers, through Hinduism and Buddhism. The more colloquial registers have influenced, and have been influenced by, Thai, Lao, Vietnamese, and Cham, all of which, due to geographical proximity and long-term cultural contact, form a sprachbund in peninsular Southeast Asia.^[7] It is also the earliest recorded and earliest written language of the Mon–Khmer family, predating Mon and by a significant margin Vietnamese,^[8] due to Old Khmer being the language of the historical empires of Chenla, Angkor and, presumably, their earlier predecessor state, Funan.

The vast majority of Khmer speakers speak **Central Khmer**, the dialect of the central plain where the Khmer are most heavily concentrated. Within Cambodia, regional accents exist in remote areas but these are regarded as varieties of Central Khmer. Two exceptions are the speech of the capital, Phnom Penh, and that of the Khmer Khe in Stung Treng province, both of which differ sufficiently enough from Central Khmer to be considered separate dialects of Khmer. Outside of Cambodia, three distinct dialects are spoken by ethnic Khmers native to areas that were historically part of the Khmer Empire. The Northern Khmer dialect is spoken by over a million Khmers in the southern regions of Northeast Thailand and is treated by some linguists as a separate language. Khmer Krom, or Southern Khmer, is the first language of the Khmer of Vietnam while the Khmer living in the remote Cardamom mountains speak a very conservative dialect that still displays features of the Middle Khmer language.

Khmer is primarily an analytic, isolating language. There are no inflections, conjugations or case endings. Instead, particles and auxiliary words are used to indicate grammatical relationships. General word order is subject–verb–object, and modifiers follow the word they modify. Classifiers appear after numbers when used to count nouns, though not always so consistently as in languages like Chinese. In spoken Khmer, topic–comment structure is common and the perceived social relation between participants determines which sets of vocabulary, such as pronouns and honorifics, are proper.

Khmer differs from neighboring languages such as Thai, Burmese, Lao and Vietnamese in that it is not a tonal language. Words are stressed on the final syllable, hence many words conform to the typical Mon–Khmer pattern of a stressed syllable preceded by a minor syllable. The language has been written in the Khmer script, an abugida descended from the Brahmi script via the southern Indian Pallava script, since at least the seventh century. The script's form and use has evolved over the centuries; its modern features include subscripted versions of consonants used to write clusters and a division of consonants into two series with different inherent vowels. Approximately 79% of Cambodians are able to read Khmer.^[9]

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Khmer	
Cambodian	
ភាសាខ្មែរ , phiāsaa khmae , ខ្មែរ , khmae	
Pronunciation	IPA: [pʰiə.ˈsaː kʰmae]
Native to	Cambodia, Vietnam, Thailand
Ethnicity	Khmer, Northern Khmer, Khmer Krom
Native speakers	16 million (2007) ^[1]
Language family	<div>Austroasiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Khmer</div>
Early forms	<div>Proto-Khmeric <ul style="list-style-type: none">Old Khmer <ul style="list-style-type: none">Middle Khmer</div>
Dialects	<div>Battambang Phnom Penh Khmer Surin (Northern Khmer) Khmer Krom (Southern Khmer) Cardamom Khmer (Western Khmer) Khmer Khe </div>
Writing system	Khmer script (abugida) <p>Khmer Braille</p>
Official status	
Official language in	 Cambodia <div> <div> ASEAN^[2]</div> <div></div> </div>
Recognised minority language in	 Vietnam <div> <div> Thailand</div> <div></div> </div>
Regulated by	Royal Academy of Cambodia
Language codes	
ISO 639-1	km (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?iso_639_1=km) Central Khmer
ISO 639-2	khm (https://www.loc.gov/standards/iso639-2/php/langcodes_name.php?code_ID=233) Central Khmer
ISO 639-3	Either: <div>khm — Khmer</div> <div>kxm — Northern Khmer</div>
Glottolog	khme1253 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/khme1253) Khmeric ^[3] <p>cent1989 (http://glottolog.org/resource/languoid/id/cent1989) Central Khmer^[4]</p>
Linguasphere	46-FBA-a

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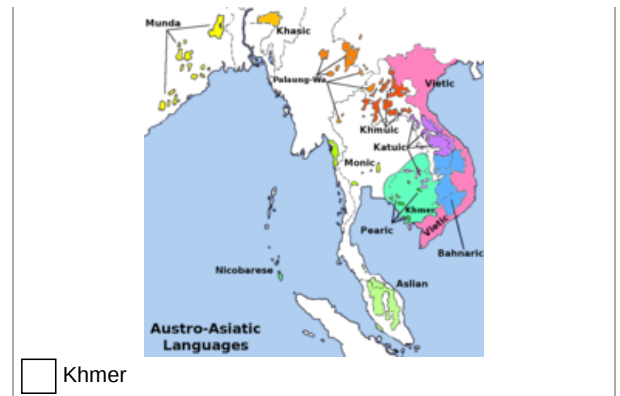
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Classification

Khmer is a member of the Austroasiatic language family, the autochthonous family in an area that stretches from the Malay Peninsula through Southeast Asia to East India.^[10] Austroasiatic, which also includes Mon, Vietnamese and Munda, has been studied since 1856 and was first proposed as a language family in 1907.^[11] Despite the amount of research, there is still doubt about the internal relationship of the languages of Austroasiatic.^[12] Diffloth places Khmer in an eastern branch of the Mon-Khmer languages.^[13] In these classification schemes Khmer's closest genetic relatives are the Bahnaric and Pearic languages.^[14] More recent classifications doubt the validity of the Mon-Khmer sub-grouping and place the Khmer language as its own branch of Austroasiatic equidistant from the other 12 branches of the family.^[12]

Geographic distribution and dialects

Khmer is spoken by some 13 million people in Cambodia, where it is the official language. It is also a second language for most of the minority groups and indigenous hill tribes there. Additionally there are a million speakers of Khmer native to southern Vietnam (1999 census)^[15] and 1.4 million in northeast Thailand (2006).^[16]

Khmer dialects, although mutually intelligible, are sometimes quite marked. Notable variations are found in speakers from Phnom Penh (Cambodia's capital city), the rural Battambang area, the areas of Northeast Thailand adjacent to Cambodia such as Surin province, the Cardamom Mountains, and southern Vietnam.^{[17][18][19]} The dialects form a continuum running roughly north to south. Standard Cambodian Khmer is mutually intelligible with the others but a Khmer Krom speaker from Vietnam, for instance, may have great difficulty communicating with a Khmer native of Sisaket Province in Thailand.

The following is a classification scheme showing the development of the modern Khmer dialects.^{[20][21]}

- Middle Khmer
 - Cardamom (Western) Khmer
 - Central Khmer
 - Surin (Northern) Khmer
 - Standard Khmer and related dialects (including Khmer Krom)



Approximate locations where various dialects of Khmer are spoken

Standard Khmer, or **Central Khmer**, the language as taught in Cambodian schools and used by the media, is based on the dialect spoken throughout the Central Plain,^[22] a region encompassed by the northwest and central provinces.

Northern Khmer (called *Khmer Surin* in Khmer) refers to the dialects spoken by many in several border provinces of present-day northeast Thailand. After the fall of the Khmer Empire in the early 15th century, the Dongrek Mountains served as a natural border leaving the Khmer north of the mountains under the sphere of influence of the Kingdom of Lan Xang. The conquests of Cambodia by Naresuan the Great for Ayutthaya furthered their political and economic isolation from Cambodia proper, leading to a dialect that developed relatively independently from the midpoint of the Middle Khmer period.^[23] This has resulted in a distinct accent influenced by the surrounding tonal languages Lao and Thai, lexical differences, and phonemic differences in both vowels and distribution of consonants. Syllable-final /r/, which has become silent in other dialects of Khmer, is still pronounced in Northern Khmer. Some linguists classify Northern Khmer as a separate but closely related language rather than a dialect.^{[24][25]}

Western Khmer, also called Cardamom Khmer or Chanthaburi Khmer, is spoken by a very small, isolated population in the Cardamom mountain range extending from western Cambodia into eastern Central Thailand. Although little studied, this variety is unique in that it maintains a definite system of vocal register that has all but disappeared in other dialects of modern Khmer.^[10]

Phnom Penh Khmer is spoken in the capital and surrounding areas. This dialect is characterized by merging or complete elision of syllables, which speakers from other regions consider a "relaxed" pronunciation. For instance, "Phnom Penh" is sometimes shortened to "m'Penh". Another characteristic of Phnom Penh speech is observed in words with an "r" either as an initial consonant or as the second member of a consonant cluster (as in the English word "bread"). The "r", trilled or flapped in other dialects, is either pronounced as a uvular trill or not pronounced at all. This alters the quality of any preceding consonant, causing a harder, more emphasized pronunciation. Another unique result is that the syllable is spoken with a low-rising or "dipping" tone much like the "hỏi" tone in Vietnamese. For example, some people pronounce /trəj/ ('fish') as [təj]: the /r/ is dropped and the vowel begins by dipping much lower in tone than standard speech and then rises, effectively doubling its length. Another example is the word /riən/ ('study'), which is pronounced [ɾiən], with the uvular "r" and the same intonation described above.^[26]

Khmer Krom or **Southern Khmer** is spoken by the indigenous Khmer population of the Mekong Delta, formerly controlled by the Khmer Empire but part of Vietnam since 1698. Khmers are persecuted by the Vietnamese government for using their native language and, since the 1950s, have been forced to take Vietnamese names.^[27] Consequently, very little research has been published regarding this dialect. It has been generally influenced by Vietnamese for three centuries and accordingly displays a pronounced accent, tendency toward monosyllabic words and lexical differences from Standard Khmer.^[28]

Khmer Khe is spoken in the Se San, Srepok and Sekong river valleys of Sesan and Siem Pang districts in Stung Treng Province. Following the decline of Angkor, the Khmer abandoned their northern territories, which the Lao then settled. In the 17th century, Chey Chetha XI led a Khmer force into Stung Treng to retake the area. The Khmer Khe living in this area of Stung Treng in modern times are presumed to be the descendants of this group. Their dialect is thought to resemble that of pre-modern Siem Reap.^[29]

Historical periods

Linguistic study of the Khmer language divides its history into four periods one of which, the Old Khmer period, is subdivided into pre-Angkorian and Angkorian.^[31] Pre-Angkorian Khmer, the Old Khmer language from 600 CE through 800, is only known from words and phrases in Sanskrit texts of the era. Old Khmer (or Angkorian Khmer) is the language as it was spoken in the Khmer Empire from the 9th century until the weakening of the empire sometime in the 13th century. Old Khmer is attested by many primary sources and has been studied in depth by a few scholars, most notably Saveros Pou, Phillip Jenner and Heinz-Jürgen Pinnow. Following the end of the Khmer Empire the language lost the standardizing influence of being the language of government and accordingly underwent a turbulent period of change in morphology, phonology and lexicon. The language of this transition period, from about the 14th to 18th centuries, is referred to as Middle Khmer and saw borrowing from Thai, Lao and, to a lesser extent, Vietnamese. The changes during this period are so profound that the rules of Modern Khmer can not be applied to correctly understand Old Khmer. The language became recognizable as Modern Khmer, spoken from the 19th century till today.^[31]

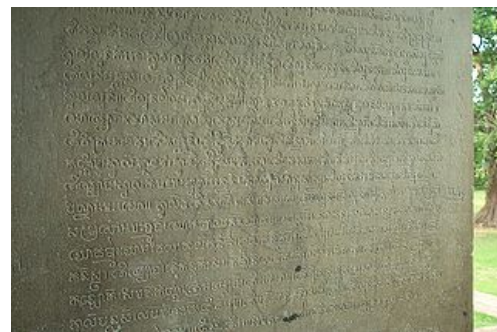
The following table shows the conventionally accepted historical stages of Khmer.^[20]

Historical Stages of Khmer	
Historical stage	Date
<u>Pre- or Proto-Khmer</u>	Before 600 CE
Pre-Angkorian Old Khmer	600–800
Angkorian Old Khmer	800 to mid-14th century
<u>Middle Khmer</u>	Mid-14th century to 18th century
Modern Khmer	1800–present

Old Khmer	
Angkorian Khmer	
ខ្មែរបុរាណ (khmae borean, khmer boran) (km)	
प्राचीन खमेर (praacheen khamer) (sa)	
Native to	Khmer Empire
Era	9th to 14th century
Language family	<div>Austroasiatic <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Old Khmer</div>
Language codes	
ISO 639-3	–
Glottolog	oldk1249 (http://glottolog.org/resource/la ngueid/id/oldk1249) ^[30]

Just as modern Khmer was emerging from the transitional period represented by Middle Khmer, Cambodia fell under the influence of French colonialism.^[32] Thailand, which had for centuries claimed suzerainty over Cambodia and controlled succession to the Cambodian throne, began losing its influence on the language.^[33] In 1887 Cambodia was fully integrated into French Indochina, which brought in a French-speaking aristocracy. This led to French becoming the language of higher education and the intellectual class. By 1907, the French had wrested over half of modern-day Cambodia, including the north and northwest where Thai had been the prestige language, back from Thai control and reintegrated it into the country.^[33]

Many native scholars in the early 20th century, led by a monk named Chuon Nath, resisted the French and Thai influences on their language. Forming the government sponsored Cultural Committee to define and standardize the modern language, they championed Khmerization, purging of foreign elements, reviving affixation, and the use of Old Khmer roots and historical Pali and Sanskrit to coin new words for modern ideas.^{[32][34]} Opponents, led by Keng Vannsak, who embraced "total Khmerization" by denouncing the reversion to classical languages and favoring the use of contemporary colloquial Khmer for neologisms, and Ieu Koeus, who favored borrowing from Thai, were also influential.^[34] Koeus later joined the Cultural Committee and supported Nath. Nath's views and prolific work won out and he is credited with cultivating modern Khmer-language identity and culture, overseeing the translation of the entire Pali Buddhist canon into Khmer. He also created the modern Khmer language dictionary that is still in use today, thereby ensuring that Khmer would survive, and indeed flourish, during the French colonial period.^[32]



A stone carved in Middle Khmer

Phonology

The phonological system described here is the inventory of sounds of the standard spoken language,^[22] represented using appropriate symbols from the International Phonetic Alphabet (IPA).

Consonants

	<u>Labial</u>	<u>Alveolar</u>	<u>Palatal</u>	<u>Velar</u>	<u>Glottal</u>
<u>Plosive</u>	p (p ^h)	t (t ^h)	c (c ^h)	k (k ^h)	ʔ
<u>Voiced plosive/Implosive</u>	b ~ b̥	d ~ d̥			
<u>Nasal</u>	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	
<u>Liquid</u>		r l			
<u>Fricative</u>		s			h
<u>Approximant</u>	ʋ ~ w		j		

The voiceless plosives /p/, /t/, /c/, /k/ may occur with or without aspiration (as [p] vs. [p^h], etc.); this difference is contrastive before a vowel. However, the aspirated sounds in that position may be analyzed as sequences of two phonemes: /ph/, /th/, /ch/, /kh/. This analysis is supported by the fact that infixes can be inserted between the stop and the aspiration; for example [t^hom] ('big') becomes [tumhum] ('size') with a nominalizing infix. When one of these plosives occurs initially before another consonant, aspiration is no longer contrastive and can be regarded as mere phonetic detail.^{[35][36]} slight aspiration is expected when the following consonant is not one of /ʔ/, /b/, /d/, /t/, /s/, /h/ (or /ŋ/ if the initial plosive is /k/).

The voiced plosives are pronounced as implosives [b̥, d̥] by most speakers, but this feature is weak in educated speech, where they become [b, d].^[37]

In syllable-final position, /h/ and /ʋ/ approach [ç] and [w] respectively. The stops /p/, /t/, /c/, /k/ are unaspirated and have no audible release when occurring as syllable finals.^[22]

In addition, the consonants /g/, /f/, /ʃ/ and /z/ occur occasionally in recent loan words in the speech of Cambodians familiar with French and other languages.

Vowels

Various authors have proposed slightly different analyses of the Khmer vowel system. This may be in part because of the wide degree of variation in pronunciation between individual speakers, even within a dialectal region.^[38] The description below follows Huffman (1970).^[22] The number of vowel nuclei and their values vary between dialects; differences exist even between the Standard Khmer system and that of the Battambang dialect on which the standard is based.^[39]

Monophthongs of Khmer^[22]

	Front		Central		Back	
	short	long	short	long	short	long
<u>Close</u>	i	iː	ɨ	ɨː	u	uː
<u>Close-mid</u>	e	eː	ə	əː	o	oː
<u>Open-mid</u>		ɛː				ɔː
<u>Open</u>	a	aː	ɑ	ɑː		

Diphthongs of Khmer^[22]

<u>Long diphthongs</u>	ia	ei	ae	ɨə	əɨ	aə	uə	ou	aɔ	ɔə
<u>Short diphthongs</u>		ěə					ũə	õə		

In addition, some diphthongs and triphthongs are analyzed as a vowel nucleus plus a semivowel (/j/ or /w/) coda because they cannot be followed by a final consonant. These include: (with short monophthongs) /ɨw/, /əw/, /aj/, /aw/, /uj/; (with long monophthongs) /əːj/, /aːj/; (with long diphthongs) /iəj/, /iəw/, /ɨəj/, /aɔj/, /aəj/ and /uəj/.^[40]

Syllable structure

A Khmer syllable begins with a single consonant, or else with a cluster of two, or rarely three, consonants. The only possible clusters of three consonants at the start of a syllable are /str/, /skr/,^[41] and (with aspirated consonants analyzed as two-consonant sequences) /sth/, /lkh/. There are 85 possible two-consonant clusters (including [p^h] etc. analyzed as /ph/ etc.). All the clusters are shown in the following table, phonetically, i.e. superscript ^h can mark either contrastive or non-contrastive aspiration (see above).

	p	b	t	d	c	k	ʔ	m	n	ɲ	ŋ	j	l	r	s	h	u	t+h	k+h	t+r	k+r
p			p ^h t-	p ^h d-	p ^h c-	p ^h k-	pʔ-		p ^h n-	p ^h ɲ-	p ^h ŋ-	p ^h j-	p ^h l-	p ^h r-	p ^h s-	p ^h -					
t	t ^h p-	t ^h b-				t ^h k-	tʔ-	t ^h m-	t ^h n-		t ^h ŋ-	t ^h j-	t ^h l-	tr-		t ^h -	t ^h u-				
c	c ^h p-	c ^h b-		cd-		c ^h k-	cʔ-	c ^h m-	c ^h n-		c ^h ŋ-		c ^h l-	cr-		c ^h -	c ^h u-				
k	k ^h p-	k ^h b-	k ^h t-	kd-	k ^h c-		kʔ-	k ^h m-	k ^h n-	k ^h ɲ-	kŋ-	k ^h j-	k ^h l-	kr-	ks-	k ^h -	k ^h u-				
s	sp-	sb-	st-	sd-		sk-	sʔ-	sm-	sn-	sɲ-	sŋ-		sl-	sr-			su-	st ^h -		str-	skr-
ʔ																	ʔu-				
m			mt-	md-	mc-		mʔ-		mn-	mɲ-			ml-	mr-	ms-	mh-					
l	lp-	lb-				lk-	lʔ-	lm-			lŋ-					lh-	lu-		lk ^h -		

Slight vowel epenthesis occurs in the clusters consisting of a plosive followed by /ʔ/, /b/, /d/, in those beginning /ʔ/, /m/, /l/, and in the cluster /kŋ-/.^{[42]:8–9}

After the initial consonant or consonant cluster comes the syllabic nucleus, which is one of the vowels listed above. This vowel may end the syllable or may be followed by a coda, which is a single consonant. If the syllable is stressed and the vowel is short, there must be a final consonant. All consonant sounds except /b/, /d/, /r/, /s/ and the aspirates can appear as the coda (although final /r/ is heard in some dialects, most notably in Northern Khmer).^[43]

A minor syllable (unstressed syllable preceding the main syllable of a word) has a structure of CV-, CrV-, CVN- or CrVN- (where C is a consonant, V a vowel, and N a nasal consonant). The vowels in such syllables are usually short; in conversation they may be reduced to [ə], although in careful or formal speech, including on television and radio, they are clearly articulated. An example of such a word is មនុស្ស *mɔnuh*, *mɔnɨh*, *měə* 'nuh ('person'), pronounced [mɔ 'nuh], or more casually [mə 'nuh].^{[42]:10}

Stress

Stress in Khmer falls on the final syllable of a word.^[44] Because of this predictable pattern, stress is non-phonemic in Khmer (it does not distinguish different meanings).

Most Khmer words consist of either one or two syllables. In most native disyllabic words, the first syllable is a minor (fully unstressed) syllable. Such words have been described as *sesquisyllabic* (i.e. as having one-and-a-half syllables). There are also some disyllabic words in which the first syllable does not behave as a minor syllable, but takes secondary stress. Most such words are compounds, but some are single morphemes (generally loanwords). An example is ភាសា ('language'), pronounced [, p^hiə 'saː].^{[42]:10}

Words with three or more syllables, if they are not compounds, are mostly loanwords, usually derived from Pali, Sanskrit, or more recently, French. They are nonetheless adapted to Khmer stress patterns.^[45] Primary stress falls on the final syllable, with secondary stress on every second syllable from the end. Thus in a three-syllable word, the first syllable has secondary stress; in a four-syllable word, the second syllable has secondary stress; in a five-syllable word, the first and third syllables have secondary stress, and so on.^{[42]:10–11} Long polysyllables are not often used in conversation.^{[22]:12}

Compounds, however, preserve the stress patterns of the constituent words. Thus សំបុកចាប, the name of a kind of cookie (literally 'bird's nest'), is pronounced [sɑm˧, bok˧ ˈcaːp], with secondary stress on the second rather than the first syllable, because it is composed of the words [sɑm˧ ˈbok] ('nest') and [caːp] ('bird').^[45]

Phonation and tone

Khmer once had a phonation distinction in its vowels, but this now survives only in the most archaic dialect (Western Khmer).^[10] The distinction arose historically when vowels after Old Khmer voiced consonants became breathy voiced and diphthongized; for example *kaa, *gaa became *kaa, *gɛa. When consonant voicing was lost, the distinction was maintained by the vowel (*kaa, *kɛa); later the phonation disappeared as well ([kaː], [kiə]).^[35] These processes explain the origin of what are now called a-series and o-series consonants in the Khmer script.

Although most Cambodian dialects are not tonal, the colloquial Phnom Penh dialect has developed a tonal contrast (level versus peaking tone) as a by-product of the elision of /r/.^[35]

Intonation

Intonation often conveys semantic context in Khmer, as in distinguishing declarative statements, questions and exclamations. The available grammatical means of making such distinctions are not always used, or may be ambiguous; for example, the final interrogative particle ៗ /teː/ can also serve as an emphasizing (or in some cases negating) particle.^[46]

The intonation pattern of a typical Khmer declarative phrase is a steady rise throughout followed by an abrupt drop on the last syllable.^[41]

ខ្ញុំមិនចង់បានទេ [ʔkʰnom mɛ̌n ɔŋ baːn | ˨teː] ('I don't want it')^[41]

Other intonation contours signify a different type of phrase such as the "full doubt" interrogative, similar to yes-no questions in English. Full doubt interrogatives remain fairly even in tone throughout, but rise sharply towards the end.

អ្នកចង់ទៅលេងសៀមរាបទេ [˧neaʔ ɕaŋ | ʔtɨw leːŋ siə̌m riəp | ˧teː] ('do you want to go to Siem Reap?')^[41]

Exclamatory phrases follow the typical steadily rising pattern, but rise sharply on the last syllable instead of falling.^[41]

សៀវភៅនេះថ្លៃណាស់ [˧siəw pʰɛ̌w nih | ʔtʰlaj | ˧nah] ('this book is expensive!')^[41]

Grammar

Khmer is primarily an analytic language with no inflection. Syntactic relations are mainly determined by word order. Old and Middle Khmer used particles to mark grammatical categories and many of these have survived in Modern Khmer but are used sparingly, mostly in literary or formal language.^[46] Khmer makes extensive use of auxiliary verbs, "directionals" and serial verb construction. Colloquial Khmer is a zero copula language, instead preferring predicative adjectives (and even predicative nouns) unless using a copula for emphasis or to avoid ambiguity in more complex sentences. Basic word order is subject–verb–object (SVO), although subjects are often dropped; prepositions are used rather than postpositions.^[47] Topic–Comment constructions are common and the language is generally head-initial (modifiers follow the words they modify). Some grammatical processes are still not fully understood by western scholars. For example, it is not clear if certain features of Khmer grammar, such as actor nominalization, should be treated as a morphological process or a purely syntactic device,^{[48]:46, 74} and some derivational morphology seems "purely decorative" and performs no known syntactic work.^{[48]:53}

Lexical categories have been hard to define in Khmer.^{[48]:360} Henri Maspero, an early scholar of Khmer, claimed the language had no parts of speech,^[48] while a later scholar, Judith Jacob, posited four parts of speech and innumerable particles.^{[49]:331} John Haiman, on the other hand, identifies "a couple dozen" parts of speech in Khmer with the caveat that Khmer words have the freedom to perform a variety of syntactic functions depending on such factors as word order, relevant particles, location within a clause, intonation and context.^[48] Some of the more important lexical categories and their function are demonstrated in the following example sentence taken from a hospital brochure:^{[48]:378}

/loːk	nĕəʔ	pdal	ɕʰiə̌m
PRONOUN	PRONOUN	VERB	NOUN
you[RESP.]	you[EM.]	provide	blood
tĕəŋ	ʔaɦ	trəw	tæ
PARTICLE	ADJECTIVE	AUXILIARY VERB	INTENSIFIER
every	all	must	have to

tɔtuəl VERB receive	nəw OBJECT MARKER	kaː NOMINALIZER	piːnɪt VERB examine
riəŋ NOUN shape	kaːj NOUN body	nɨŋ CONJUNCTION and	pdaɪ VERB provide
nəw OBJECT MARKER	prauðət NOUN history	sok ^h ap ^h iəp ADJECTIVE health	ciə COPULA be
mun ADVERB before	ciə COPULA be	sən/ ADVERB first	

'All blood donors must pass a physical examination and provide a health history first (before they can give blood).'

Morphology

Modern Khmer is an isolating language, which means that it uses little productive morphology. There is some derivation by means of prefixes and infixes, but this is a remnant of Old Khmer and not always productive in the modern language.^[50] Khmer morphology is evidence of a historical process through which the language was, at some point in the past, changed from being an agglutinative language to adopting an isolating typology.^[51] Affixed forms are lexicalized and cannot be used productively to form new words.^{[42]:311} Below are some of the most common affixes with examples as given by Huffman.^{[42]:312–316}

Affix	Function	Word	Meaning	Affixed Word	Meaning
prefixed /p/	causation	/dac/ /daəm/	"broke, torn" "origin"	/pdac/ /pdaəm/	"to tear apart" "to originate (trans.)"
prefixed /rɔ/	derives adjectives nominalization	/lŭət/ /baŋ/	"to extinguish" "to hide"	/rɔlŭət/ /rɔbaŋ/	"extinguished" "a screen, shade"
prefixed /pra/	reciprocity	/k ^h am/ /douc/	"to bite" "similar"	/prak ^h am/ /pradouc/	"to bite each other" "to compare"
prefixed /baN/	causation	/baek/ /daə/ /riən/	"to break (intrans.)" "to walk" "to study, learn"	/bambaek/ /bandaə/ /baŋriən/	"to cause to break" "to take for a walk" "to teach"
infixd /am/	causation	/sʔaːt/ /slap/	"to be clean" "to die"	/samʔaːt/ /samlap/	"to clean" "to kill"
infixd /VmN/	nominalization	/daə/ /dəŋ/ /cɨə/	"to walk" "to know (something)" "to believe"	/dəmnaə/ /dəmnəŋ/ /cumnɨə/	"a trip" "information" "belief"

Compounding in Khmer is a common derivational process that takes two forms, coordinate compounds and repetitive compounds. Coordinate compounds join two unbound morphemes (independent words) of similar meaning to form a compound signifying a concept more general than either word alone.^{[42]:296} Coordinate compounds join either two nouns or two verbs. Repetitive compounds, one of the most productive derivational features of Khmer, use reduplication of an entire word to derive words whose meaning depends on the class of the reduplicated word.^{[42]:185} A repetitive compound of a noun indicates plurality or generality while that of an adjectival verb could mean either an intensification or plurality.

Coordinate compounds:^{[42]:296–297}

/
ʔəwpuk/ + /mdaːj/ ⇒ ʔəwpuk
 mdaːj/
 'father' 'mother' ⇒ 'parents'

/dək/ + /nðəm/ ⇒ /dək
 nðəm/
 'to transport' 'to carry' ⇒ 'to lead'

Repetitive compounds:^{[42]:185–185}

/c^hap/ ⇒ /c^hap
 c^hap/ /srəj/ ⇒ /srəj srəj/
 'fast' 'very fast, 'women' 'women,

quickly'

women in
general'

Nouns and pronouns

Khmer nouns do not inflect for grammatical gender or singular/plural. There are no articles, but indefiniteness is often expressed by the word for "one" (មួយ, /muəj/) following the noun as in ឆ្កែមួយ (/cʰkae muəj/ "a dog"). Plurality can be marked by postnominal particles, numerals, or reduplication of a following adjective, which, although similar to intensification, is usually not ambiguous due to context.^[52]

/cʰkae craən/	or	/cʰkae piː/	or	/cʰkae tʰom tʰom/
dog many		dog two		dog large large
'many dogs'		'two dogs'		'large dogs'

Classifying particles are used after numerals, but are not always obligatory as they are in Thai or Chinese, for example, and are often dropped in colloquial speech. Khmer nouns are divided into two groups: mass nouns, which take classifiers; and specific, nouns, which do not. The overwhelming majority are mass nouns.^{[42]:67–68}

/kʰmaw.daj piː daəm/
pencil two long cylindrical
object[១០០០]
'two pencils'

Possession is colloquially expressed by word order. The possessor is placed after the thing that is possessed.^{[48]:160} Alternatively, in more complex sentences or when emphasis is required, a possessive construction using the word របស់ (/rɔbɔh/ ~ /ləbɔh/, "property, object") may be employed. In formal and literary contexts, the possessive particle នៃ (nɛj) is used.^{[42]:358}

/puəʔmaːʔ kʰnom/	or	/puəʔmaːʔ rɔbɔh kʰnom/	or	/puəʔmaːʔ nɛj kʰnom/
friend I		friend property I		friend <u>POSS</u> I
'my friend'		'my friend'		'my friend'

Pronouns are subject to a complicated system of social register, the choice of pronoun depending on the perceived relationships between speaker, audience and referent (see Social registers below). Kinship terms, nicknames and proper names are often used as pronouns (including for the first person) among intimates. Subject pronouns are frequently dropped in colloquial conversation.^[52]

Adjectives, verbs and verb phrases may be made into nouns by the use of nominalization particles. Three of the more common particles used to create nouns are /kaː/, /sec kdəj/, and /pʰiəp/.^{[48]:45–48} These particles are prefixed most often to verbs to form abstract nouns. The latter, derived from Sanskrit, also occurs as a suffix in fixed forms borrowed from Sanskrit and Pali such as /sokʰa.pʰiəp/ ("health") from /sok/ ("to be healthy").^[45]

/kaː rŭəhnɛw/	/sec kdəj deik/	/pʰiəp saːm rum/
<u>NMLZ</u> to live	<u>NMLZ</u> to lie down	<u>NMLZ</u> appropriate
'life'	'[the act of] lying down'	'appropriateness' ^[48]

Adjectives and adverbs

Adjectives, demonstratives and numerals follow the noun they modify. Adverbs likewise follow the verb. Morphologically, adjectives and adverbs are not distinguished, with many words often serving either function. Adjectives are also employed as verbs as Khmer sentences rarely use a copula.^[42]

Degrees of comparison are constructed syntactically. Comparatives are expressed using the word ជាង /ciəŋ/: "A X /ciəŋ/ [B]" (A is more X [than B]). The most common way to express superlatives is with ជាងគេ /ciəŋ keː/: "A X /ciəŋ keː/" (A is the most X).^[52] Intensity is also expressed syntactically, similar to other languages of the region, by reduplication or with the use of intensifiers.^[52]

/srəj nuh/ sʔaːt/	/srəj nuh sʔaːt sʔaːt/	/srəj nuh sʔaːt nah/
girl DEM pretty	girl DEM pretty pretty	girl DEM pretty very
'That girl is pretty.'	'That girl is very pretty.'	'That girl is very pretty.'

Verbs

As is typical of most East Asian languages,^[53] Khmer verbs do not inflect at all; tense, aspect and mood can be expressed using auxiliary verbs, particles (such as កំពុង /kəmpuŋ/, placed before a verb to express continuous aspect) and adverbs (such as "yesterday", "earlier", "tomorrow"), or may be understood from context. Serial verb construction is quite common.^{[48]:253}

Khmer verbs are a relatively open class and can be divided into two types, main verbs and auxiliary verbs.^{[48]:254} Huffman defined a Khmer verb as "any word that can be (negated)",^{[42]:56} and further divided main verbs into three classes.

Transitive verbs are verbs that may be followed by a direct object:

/k ^h nom nam baj/	/k ^h nom tɛn baː rəj/
I eat rice	I buy cigarettes
'I eat rice.'	'I buy cigarettes.'

Intransitive verbs are verbs that can not be followed by an object:

/k ^h nom daə tɛw p ^h saː/	/ʔaŋcəŋ ʔaŋkuj/
I walk DIRECTIONAL market	to invite to sit
'I walk to the market.'	'Please sit.'

Adjectival verbs are a word class that has no equivalent in English. When modifying a noun or verb, they function as adjectives or adverbs, respectively, but they may also be used as main verbs equivalent to English "be + *adjective*".

ADJECTIVE: /proh ʔaː/
 boy handsome
 'handsome boy'

ADVERB: /proh nuh t^huəː kaː ʔaː/
 boy DEM to work good
 'That boy works well.'

VERB: /proh nuh ʔaː/
 boy DEM handsome
 'That boy is handsome.'^{[42]:56}

Syntax

Syntax is the rules and processes that describe how sentences are formed in a particular language, how words relate to each other within clauses or phrases and how those phrases relate to each other within a sentence to convey meaning.^[54] Khmer syntax is very analytic. Relationships between words and phrases are signified primarily by word order supplemented with auxiliary verbs and, particularly in formal and literary registers, grammatical marking particles.^[48] Grammatical phenomena such as negation and aspect are marked by particles while interrogative sentences are marked either by particles or interrogative words equivalent to English "wh-words".

A complete Khmer sentence consists of four basic elements—an optional topic, an optional subject, an obligatory predicate, and various adverbials and particles.^[55] The topic and subject are noun phrases, predicates are verb phrases and another noun phrase acting as an object or verbal attribute often follows the predicate.^[55]

Basic constituent order

When combining these noun and verb phrases into a sentence the order is typically SVO:

/k ^h nom ʔaoj ceik	muəj camnuən/
SB ₁	VERB OB ₁
I give banana one	bunch[CL _{PL}]
'I gave a bunch of bananas.'	

When both a direct object and indirect object are present without any grammatical markers, the preferred order is SV(DO)(IO). In such a case, if the direct object phrase contains multiple components, the indirect object immediately follows the noun of the direct object phrase and the direct object's modifiers follow the indirect object:

/k ^h nom ʔaoj ceik	cruːk muəj camnuən/
SB ₁	VERB DIR.OB ₁ IND.OB ₁
I give banana pig	one bunch[CL _{PL}]
'I gave the pig a bunch of bananas.' ^{[48]:207}	

This ordering of objects can be changed and the meaning clarified with the inclusion of particles. The word /daɪ/, which normally means "to arrive" or "towards", can be used as a preposition meaning "to":

/kʰnom ʔaɔj ceik muəj camnuən dɔl cruːk/
 I give banana one bunch[CLF] toward pig
 'I gave a bunch of bananas to the pigs.'^{[48]:207}

Alternatively, the indirect object could precede the direct object if the object-marking preposition /nəw/ were used:

/kʰnom ʔaɔj cruːk nəw ceik muəj camnuən/
 I give pig OBJ.MARKER banana one bunch[CLF]
 'I gave the pig a bunch of bananas.'^{[48]:207}

However, in spoken discourse OSV is possible when emphasizing the object in a topic–comment-like structure.^{[48]:211}

/tuːk muəj kɔŋ pram ʔaŋ/
 boat one to sit five monk[CLF]
 'In a boat sit five monks.'^{[48]:148}

/
 uɪʔciə cao luəc mɪn baːn/
 science thief to steal NEG COMPL
 'Science, a thief can not steal.'^{[48]:211}

Noun phrase

The noun phrase in Khmer typically has the following structure:^{[42]:50–51[49]:83}

NOUN PHRASE = (HONORIFIC) NOUN (ADJECTIVAL MODIFIERS) (NUMERAL) (CLASSIFIER) (DEMONSTRATIVE)

The elements in parentheses are optional. Honorifics are a class of words that serve to index the social status of the referent. Honorifics can be kinship terms or personal names, both of which are often used as first and second person pronouns, or specialized words such as /preah/ ('god') before royal and religious objects.^{[48]:155} The most common demonstratives are /nih/ ('this, these') and /nuh/ ('that, those'). The word /ae nuh/ ('those over there') has a more distal or vague connotation.^[45] If the noun phrase contains a possessive adjective, it follows the noun and precedes the numeral. If a descriptive attribute co-occurs with a possessive, the possessive construction (/rɔbɔh/) is expected.^{[42]:73}

Some examples of typical Khmer noun phrases are:

Khmer text	IPA	gloss	translation
ផ្ទះស្តីបីបួនខ្ពង់នេះ	/ptɕəh skəm.skaj bəj buən kʰnɑːŋ nih/	house high three four spine[CLF] these NOUN ADJ NUM NUM CLASSIFIER DEM	'these three or four high houses' ^{[48]:142}
ចេកទុំពីរស្លឹកនេះ	/ceːk tum piː snət nih/	banana ripe two bunches[CLF] these NOUN ADJ NUM CLASSIFIER DEM	these two bunches of ripe bananas
ពួកម៉ាកខ្ញុំពីរនាក់នេះ	/puəʔmaʔ kʰnom piː nəə nih/	friend I two person[CLF] these NOUN POSS NUM CLASSIFIER DEM	these two friends of mine
ពួកម៉ាកតូចរបស់ខ្ញុំពីរនាក់នេះ	/puəʔmaʔ touc rɔbɔh kʰnom piː nəə nih/	friend small of I two person[CLF] these NOUN ADJ POSS NUM CLASSIFIER DEM	these two small friends of mine ^{[42]:73}

The Khmer particle /dɑː/ marked attributes in Old Khmer noun phrases and is used in formal and literary language to signify that what precedes is the noun and what follows is the attribute. Modern usage may carry the connotation of mild intensity.^{[48]:163}

/
 uɪəl srae dɑː luɪŋ
 field paddy ADJ MARKER vast
 '(very) expansive fields and paddies'

Verb phrase

Khmer verbs are completely uninflected, and once a subject or topic has been introduced or is clear from context the noun phrase may be dropped. Thus, the simplest possible sentence in Khmer consists of a single verb. For example, /tɨw/ 'to go' on its own can mean "I'm going.", "He went.", "They've gone.", "Let's go.", etc.^{[42]:17} This also results in long strings of verbs such as:

/kʰnom ɕaŋ tɨw daə leːŋ/
I to to to to
want go walk play
'I want to go for a
stroll.'^{[42]:187}

Khmer uses three verbs for what translates into English as the copula. The general copula is /ciə/; it is used to convey identity with nominal predicates.^{[48]:212} For locative predicates, the copula is /nɨw/.^{[48]:212} The verb /miən/ is the "existential" copula meaning "there is" or "there exists".^{[48]:208}

/piəsaː ciə kaː sɑmdaɛŋ cət kumnɨt krɔəp jaːŋ/
language COPULA to express heart thought all kind
'Language is the expression of all emotions and ideas'

/viə nɨw ciːt uðət/ he COPULA close temple 'He is close to the temple.'	/miən pʰaen kaː/ to exist plan 'There is a plan.'
---	---

Negation is achieved by putting មិន /mɨn/ before the verb and the particle ទេ /teː/ at the end of the sentence or clause. In colloquial speech, verbs can also be negated without the need for a final particle, by placing ទេ /ʔat/~/ʔət/ before them.^[52]

/kʰnom ciə/ I to believe 'I believe.'	/kʰnom mɨn ciə teː/ I NEG to believe NEG 'I don't believe.'	/kʰnom ʔat ciə/ I NEG to believe 'I don't believe.'
---	---	---

Past tense can be conveyed by adverbs, such as "yesterday" or by the use of perfective particles such as /haəj/

/kɔət tɨw msəlmɨn/ he to go yesterday 'He went yesterday.'	/kɔət tɨw haəj/ he to go PERF 'He left.' or 'He's already gone.' ^{[42]:22}
--	---

Different senses of future action can also be expressed by the use of adverbs like "tomorrow" or by the future tense marker /nɨŋ/, which is placed immediately before the verb, or both:

/sʔaek kʰnom nɨŋ tɨw saːlaː riən/
tomorrow I FUTURE to go school
'Tomorrow, I will go to school.'^[45]

Imperatives are often unmarked.^{[48]:240} For example, in addition to the meanings given above, the "sentence" /tɨw/ can also mean "Go!". Various words and particles may be added to the verb to soften the command to varying degrees, including to the point of politeness (jussives).^{[48]:240}

/cou saː k lbaːŋ kʰluən aɛŋ coh/ IMP try try you REEL IMP 'Go ahead and try it yourself.'	/soum tʰuəː taːm bandam kɔət tɨw/ please do follow instruction he IMP 'Please follow his instructions.'
---	---

Prohibitives take the form "/kom/ + VERB" and also are often softened by the addition of the particle /ʔəj/ to the end of the phrase.^{[48]:242}

/kom nɨw tiː nih ʔəj/
PROH to be place DEM COHORTATIVE
'Don't stay in this place.'

Questions

There are three basic types of questions in Khmer.^{[42]:46} Questions requesting specific information use question words. Polar questions are indicated with interrogative particles, most commonly /teː/, a homonym of the negation particle. Tag questions are indicated with various particles and rising inflection.^{[42]:57} The SVO word order is generally not inverted for questions.

/loːk tɨw naː/ Q: Who is he?	/loːk sdaɔp baːn teː/ Q: What is his name?	/loːk tɨw psaː haəj riː nɨw/ Q: How long has he been here?
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you to go where
'Where are you going?'

you understand MODAL Q
'Can you understand?'

you to go market ឯទេ or yet
'Have you gone to the store yet?'

In more formal contexts and in polite speech, questions are also marked at their beginning by the particle /taə/.

/taə lo : k ʔɑŋcə : ɲ tɨw na : /
Q you to invite to go where
'Where are you going,
sir?':[42]:302

Passive voice

Khmer does not have a passive voice,^[46] but there is a construction utilizing the main verb /trəw/ ("to hit", "to be correct", "to affect") as an auxiliary verb meaning "to be subject to" or "to undergo"—which results in sentences that are translated to English using the passive voice.^{[48]:286–288}

/pi : msəlmɨŋ kʰɲom trəw cʰkae kʰam/
from yesterday I to undergo dog to bite
'Yesterday I was bitten by a dog.'^{[42]:302}

Clause syntax

Complex sentences are formed in Khmer by the addition of one or more clauses to the main clause. The various types of clauses in Khmer include the coordinate clause, the relative clause and the subordinate clause. Word order in clauses is the same for that of the basic sentences described above.^[48] Coordinate clauses do not necessarily have to be marked; they can simply follow one another. When explicitly marked, they are joined by words similar to English conjunctions such as /nɨŋ/ ("and") and /haəj/ ("and then") or by clause-final conjunction-like adverbs /dae/ and /pʰɑ : ŋ/, both of which can mean "also" or "and also"; disjunction is indicated by /rɨ : / ("or").^{[48]:217–218[56]} Relative clauses can be introduced by /dael/ ("that") but, similar to coordinate clauses, often simply follow the main clause. For example, both phrases below can mean "the hospital bed that has wheels".^{[48]:313}

/krɛ : pɛ : t miən kaŋ ruŋ/ /krɛ : pɛ : t dæɭ miən kaŋ ruŋ/
bed hospital have wheel to push bed hospital ឯទេ have wheel to push

Relative clauses are more likely to be introduced with /dael/ if they do not immediately follow the head noun.^{[48]:314} Khmer subordinate conjunctions always precede a subordinate clause.^{[48]:366} Subordinate conjunctions include words such as /prəəh/ ("because"), /hak bəj/ ("seems as if") and /daəmbəj/ ("in order to").^{[42]:251[48]}

Numerals

Counting in Khmer is based on a biquinary system (the numbers from 6 to 9 have the form "five one", "five two", etc.) However, the words for multiples of ten from 30 to 90 are not related to the basic Khmer numbers, but are probably borrowed from Thai. Khmer numerals, which were inherited from Indian numerals, are used more widely than Western Arabic numerals.

The principal number words are listed in the following table, which gives Western and Khmer digits, Khmer spelling and IPA transcription.^[50]

0	០	សូន្យ	/soun/				
1	១	មួយ	/muəj/				
2	២	ពីរ	/pi : /	20	២០	ម្ភៃ	/mə' phɨj/
3	៣	បី	/bəj/	30	៣០	សាមសិប	/sa : m səp/
4	៤	បួន	/bun/	40	៤០	សែសិប	/sae səp/
5	៥	ប្រាំ	/pram/	50	៥០	ហាសិប	/ha : səp/
6	៦	ប្រាំមួយ	/pram muəj/	60	៦០	ហុកសិប	/hok səp/
7	៧	ប្រាំពីរ	/pram pi : /, /pram pɨ/	70	៧០	ចិតសិប	/cət səp/
8	៨	ប្រាំបី	/pram bəj/	80	៨០	ប៉ៃតសិប	/paet səp/
9	៩	ប្រាំបួន	/pram bun/	90	៩០	កៅសិប	/kau səp/
10	១០	ដប់	/dɑp/	100	១០០	មួយរយ	/muəj rɔ : j/

Intermediate numbers are formed by compounding the above elements. Powers of ten are denoted by loan words: រយ /rɔːj/ (100), ពាន់ /pəən/ (1,000), ម៉ឺន /məɛn/ (10,000), សែន /saen/ (100,000) and លាន /liən/ (1,000,000) from Thai and កោដិ /kaot/ (10,000,000) from Sanskrit.^[57]

Ordinal numbers are formed by placing the particle ទី /tiː/ before the corresponding cardinal number.^[45]

Social registers

Khmer employs a system of registers in which the speaker must always be conscious of the social status of the person spoken to. The different registers, which include those used for common speech, polite speech, speaking to or about royals and speaking to or about monks, employ alternate verbs, names of body parts and pronouns. This results in what appears to foreigners as separate languages and, in fact, isolated villagers often are unsure how to speak with royals and royals raised completely within the court do not feel comfortable speaking the common register. As an example, the word for "to eat" used between intimates or in reference to animals is /siː/. Used in polite reference to commoners, it is /ɲam/. When used of those of higher social status, it is /pisa/ or /tɔtuəl tiən/. For monks the word is /cʰan/ and for royals, /saoj/.^[8] Another result is that the pronominal system is complex and full of honorific variations, just a few of which are shown in the table below.^[45]

Situational usage	I/me		you		he/she/it	
Intimate or addressing an inferior	អញ	[ʔaŋ]	ឯង	[ʔaɛŋ]	វា	[uiə]
neutral	ខ្ញុំ	[kʰnom]	អ្នក	[neʔʔ]	គេ	[keː]
Formal	យើងខ្ញុំ or ខ្ញុំបាទ	[jəːŋ kʰnom] [kʰnom baːt]	លោក (or kinship term, title or rank)	[loːk]	គាត់	[kɔəʔ]
Layperson to/about Buddhist clergy	ខ្ញុំព្រះកុណា	[kʰnom preʔh kaʔruʔnaː]	ព្រះតេជព្រះគុណ	[preʔh daɛc preʔh kun]	ព្រះអង្គ	[preʔh aŋ]
Buddhist clergy to layperson	អាត្មា or អាចត្តិ	[aːttma] [aːckdəj]	ញោមស្រី (to female) ញោមប្រុស (to male)	[ɲoːm srəj] [ɲoːm proh]	ឧបាសក (to male) ឧបាសិកា (to female)	[ʔuʔbaːsaʔ] [ʔuʔbaːsiʔkaː]
when addressing royalty	ខ្ញុំព្រះបាទអម្ចាស់ or ទ្វលបង្គំ (male), ខ្ញុំម្ចាស់ (female)	[kʰnom preʔh baːt aʔmcah]	ព្រះករុណា	[preʔh kaʔruʔnaː]	ទ្រង់	[truʔŋ]

Writing system

Khmer is written with the Khmer script, an abugida developed from the Pallava script of India before the 7th century when the first known inscription appeared.^[58] Written left-to-right with vowel signs that can be placed after, before, above or below the consonant they follow, the Khmer script is similar in appearance and usage to Thai and Lao, both of which were based on the Khmer system. The Khmer script is also distantly related to the Mon script, the ancestor of the modern Burmese script.^[58] Within Cambodia, literacy in the Khmer alphabet is estimated at 77.6%.^[59]



An example of modern Khmer script at the Cambodian Embassy in Berlin

Consonant symbols in Khmer are divided into two groups, or series. The first series carries the inherent vowel /ɑː/ while the second series carries the inherent vowel /ɔː/. The Khmer names of the series, /aʔkʰosaʔ/ ('voiceless') and /kʰosaʔ/ ('voiced'), respectively, indicate that the second series consonants were used to represent the voiced phonemes of Old Khmer. As the voicing of stops was lost, however, the contrast shifted to the phonation of the attached vowels, which, in turn, evolved into a simple difference of vowel quality, often by diphthongization.^[35] This process has resulted in the Khmer alphabet having two symbols for most consonant phonemes and each vowel symbol having two possible readings, depending on the series of the initial consonant:^[22]

- ត + ា = តា /taː/ 'grandfather'
- ឝ + ា = ទា /tiə/ 'duck'

Examples

The following text is from Article 1 of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights.

Khmer	មនុស្សទាំងអស់កើតមកមានសេរីភាពនិងភាពស្មើគ្នាក្នុងសិទ្ធិនិងសេចក្តីថ្លៃថ្នូរ។ មនុស្សគ្រប់រូបសុទ្ធតែមានវិចារណញ្ញាណនិងសតិសម្បជញ្ញៈ ហើយត្រូវប្រព្រឹត្តចំពោះគ្នាទៅវិញទៅមកក្នុងស្មារតីរាប់អានគ្នាជាបងប្អូន។
Khmer transliteration	mnoussa teangoasa kaetamk mean seripheap ning pheap smae knea knong setthi ning sechakdeithlaithnaur. mnoussa krobroub sotthote mean vichearonanhnhean ning satesambochonnhn haey trauv br pru td champoh knea towvinhtowmk knong smartei reaban knea chea bangobaaun.

See also

- [Literature of Cambodia](#)
- [Romanization of Khmer](#)

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- [Khmer phrasebook](#) from Wikivoyage
- [Kheng.info](http://kheng.info/) (<http://kheng.info/>)—An online audio dictionary for learning Khmer, with thousands of native speaker recordings and text segmentation software (http://kheng.info/word_segmentation/).
- [SEalang Project: Mon–Khmer languages. The Khmeric Branch](http://sealang.net/mk/khmeric.htm) (<http://sealang.net/mk/khmeric.htm>)
- [Khmer Swadesh vocabulary list](https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Khmer_Swadesh_list) (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Khmer_Swadesh_list) (from Wiktionary's [Swadesh-list appendix](#) (https://en.wiktionary.org/wiki/Appendix:Swadesh_lists))
- [Dictionary and SpellChecker](https://code.google.com/p/khmer-dictionary-tools/) (<https://code.google.com/p/khmer-dictionary-tools/>) open sourced and collaborative project based on [Chuon Nath Khmer Dictionary](#)
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